



## SEARCH provides technical assistance for JIN planning

The National Consortium for Justice Information and Statistics (SEARCH) recently assessed the technical and implementation plan that was developed by a consultant for the Justice Information Network in 2002. SEARCH judged the planning document, which laid out a number of architectural choices, to be very well done, comprehensive and of high quality. The main issues identified are as follows:

- ♦ The governance structure is established to make policy-level decisions that support integration as outlined within the strategic plan.
- ♦ Additional time spent adjusting the language of strategic planning documents will not be productive.
- ♦ The only viable solution is a hub and spoke approach.
- ♦ By creating a master index, the state will ensure that networks and applications are accessed efficiently and response time is optimized.

Building on this information, the JIN Program plans to develop a realistic plan for statewide integration, including schedule, costs and resource requirements. The planning documents identify options for which the state will seek help from the vendor community to design a workable solution for integration.

SEARCH is a nonprofit membership organization created by and for the states. A membership group comprised of one gubernatorial appointee from each of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands, serves as the governing body. The group is dedicated to improving the criminal justice system and the quality of justice through better information management, the effective application of information and identification technology and responsible law and policy.

Funding for SEARCH activities is provided by annual fees from member states; grants from U.S. Department of Justice agencies such as the Bureau of Justice Assistance, Bureau of Justice Statistics and National Institute of Justice; State grants; and Federal, State and local contracts. ♦

# Summary Offender Profile: Justice information anywhere, anytime

Imagine ... with the proper authorization and authentication, a police officer or prosecutor can access a “one-stop,” easy to use, secure, Web-based query application to gather information about a particular offender. By entering the offender’s name and other key demographic data into the computer, the user gains access to offender identities, criminal history, and custody status for the offender in question.

The prosecutor notes that the report includes a list of prior arrests and convictions, custody status, a flag indicating that the subject is a registered sex offender, and that a DNA profile is available from the State Crime Laboratory. Using the data transfer function, the prosecutor downloads the information he needs.

The prosecutor then clicks on the court case number provided with the sex offense conviction, and the hyperlink function begins a query of the court’s management information system. Pertinent information from the case is transmitted to the prosecutor’s system. The prosecutor then returns to the original application session and uses the hyperlink function to examine the sex offender registration record. The prosecutor contracts the State Crime Laboratory for additional information on the offender’s DNA profile.

This is one example of how criminal justice professionals who need timely and accurate information can use the Summary Offender Profile to increase criminal record keeping efficiency and accuracy, reduce justice system operational spending, and increase public safety.

## Time saving, cost effective and integrated solution

The Justice Information Network (JIN), governed by the Washington Integrated Justice Information

Board, has created an infrastructure that supports digital information sharing among Washington state criminal justice agencies. The SOP is one project within this effort that will provide access to complete, accurate, and timely offender information. The SOP is the first JIN project that will benefit all network partners by providing the information necessary for critical decision-making in officer safety, public safety, and judicial processing. The SOP answers the three most vital questions about offenders: Who are you, what have you done, and where are you?

SOP users will discover many design characteristics that enhance accuracy and efficiency:

**Ease of use:** A single query will gather information from multiple sources and eliminate the need for access to multiple systems.

**Standard user interface protocols:** The system will use a Web browser that is easy to navigate.

**Automated account management:** Information from the Washington Crime Information Center system will be used to initialize accounts – eliminating the need for a system administrator. Access to the application will require current FBI training.

**Security and audit considerations:** The Fortress security application will be used to authenticate system users and digital certificates will be required for all server-to-server data exchanges. This security system will provide access to authorized users only.

## Status update and future plans

Usability and user acceptance testing of the SOP application, developed by Templar Corporation, will begin in November, and will continue for approximately one month. Two counties and several Federal agencies are participating in the

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# The JIN program office – six-month report

The Justice Information Network (JIN) is a collection of Washington state individuals and institutions, that are dedicated to improving the exchange and quality of information in the justice community. Although constituents such as the courts, state patrol and local entities have made considerable improvements to their business processes over the last 10 years, the achievement of actual *integration* – and the anticipated improvements to efficiency and quality – has proven particularly elusive.

I became the Washington state Justice Information Network Program Director in April 2003. After six months, here is my current Top 5 list for successful justice integration efforts.

## 1. Governance structures are insufficient to deliver results.

A governance structure for the JIN has existed for almost 20 years. No one disagrees with the premise of integrated justice systems or individual commitments to that end. Although educational, a governance structure that focuses purely on sharing information about separate projects developed by different entities, doesn't particularly bring about changes in behavior or expenditures.

JIN membership includes state and local government stakeholders, many of whom "represent" statewide professional associations that do not have decision-making authority for their colleagues. This is further complicated by local jurisdictions that pursue their own integration plans or automate specific aspects of the justice process without the involvement of the statewide JIN community or the knowledge of their JIN representative.

The Board needs to establish rules and standards for the JIN, so that local project managers have data to develop their own systems and proposals. We can't put restrictions on what locals do, but I would hate to be a project manager who has to explain why a delayed or unsuccessful project does

not follow the state playbook.

## 2. Clearly define terms and how to measure success.

It's interesting to note that even after 20 years, no definitions exist for the JIN, and board members differ on whether it is a thing (providing connectivity, developing and operating applications) or a concept (a collection of individuals exchanging information).

In developing a vision and plan for integrated justice information, it is imperative that all players understand and have common definitions of guiding principles. For instance, as stated in a 1998 memorandum of understanding, the criminal justice community agrees that

*...no Justice Information Network related system or component will be developed or integrated into the network without effective participation of state and local stakeholders.*

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test. Their feedback will help identify potential application and support material refinements.

The current plan is to host the system at the Department of Information Services beginning in 2004, and to launch phased revisions based on the priorities set by the Washington Integrated Justice Information Board. Some of the revisions that are under consideration include

- ♦ photographs from bookings, DOC, DOL and WSP;
- ♦ Jail Booking and Reporting system information; and
- ♦ links to the record management systems of other counties and municipalities. ♦

This appears to reflect a statewide commitment to integrated justice, and government officials often cite the memorandum as controlling authority. But closer scrutiny reveals some gaping holes in the language – terms that are either undefined, or that no one seems able to explain. For example, what is “effective participation of stakeholders?” And how can something that is purely a concept have systems or components? Such terms are so general that they are essentially meaningless. In addition, since the JIN governance structure has only minimal authority over the allocation or expenditure of funds, the manner in which a violation might be addressed is undocumented.

### **3. Individual projects do not amount to integration.**

Using technology to improve the business of individual JIN stakeholders has facilitated tremendous progress in recent years. Examples include upgrading various legacy systems and the purchase of Livescan machines to improve the handling of fingerprints. These projects do not, however, support a clearly defined plan for integration or fit within an established enterprise architecture.

One of our challenges (and a legislative requirement) this year will be to develop a comprehensive plan by September 2004 that describes the steps and necessary funding to achieve more success with justice information integration. Indeed, the lack of such a plan makes it difficult to find funding—one of the reasons I was hired—from various sources, including the federal government.

### **4. Grants administration needs to be open and documented.**

Given budget difficulties states are facing throughout the country, it is not surprising that funding is at the center of most debates about integrated justice. The current economic climate is the main reason why the Board decided not to seek state funding for the program office, choosing instead to pool funds to hire a program director.

Of particular interest is the availability of federal block grants for integrated justice through the Department of Justice, the state agency charged with disbursement and management. I have found, however, that the process of applying for and securing grants from the state agency is hindered by a lack of evaluation criteria and inadequate project oversight by the granting authority. Moreover, the same project requests are funded every year without a comprehensive review by the Board to measure how the project is furthering integration efforts.

To be successful, the Board must find ways to assert the state’s collective interest so that grant applications and awards reflect the community’s goal of integrated justice. Also, projects must be measured against clear criteria on a regular basis:

- ♦ While federal deadlines are not static, states need to be more attuned to when grants will be announced each year;
- ♦ State offices administering the federal grants must provide sufficient information about grant opportunities, deadlines, and the criteria by which projects will be measured.
- ♦ Administrators must have an expertise in the justice and project management process, so they are able to offer meaningful oversight.
- ♦ The Board, or a designated subcommittee, must actively participate in reviewing grant applications, conducting interviews and ranking projects by priority. In Washington, I have suggested the Board revisit its current priorities (set in 2001) and create a steering committee, which would oversee the administration of a transparent, criteria-driven and well-documented process.

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## **5. Outside resources are available, informative and free.**

My colleagues, who work throughout the country in the emergent field of justice integration, have provided valuable insight and guidance via e-mail or phone. A number of groups are available to support a state's pursuit of integrated justice.

Washington has received technical assistance this year from SEARCH, the Center for Society Law and Justice and the National Governor's Association. Staff members at these organizations are extremely knowledgeable and willing to provide assistance with the state effort, including providing support for member surveys, facilitating strategic planning sessions, reviewing project material and researching justice information integration in other states.

I have also found members of the various user groups, such as the Justice Information Sharing Professionals (<http://www.jisp.us/>) to be extremely

helpful in answering questions about legislative changes, project documentation and best practices.

Finally, the private sector appears to be willing to take on projects in the hope of winning future business. Like many other states, Washington is in the process of preparing a Request For Information (RFI), which essentially asks the private sector to prepare an integration plan (including a proof of concept or pilot) at no cost to the state. Based on results in other states and feedback from the vendor community, we are confident that the responses will be informative and of good quality. As a result, the September 2004 report, which is required by the legislature, will reflect a thorough and workable solution for the state.

## **6. Homeland Security expectations must be tempered.**

Among my responsibilities as Program Director is raising funds for the JIN. The advice I have received in meeting after meeting is to focus on

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New website for Justice Information Sharing Professionals (<http://www.jisp.us/>)

IJIS Institute and IWG adopt policy in support of GLOBAL Justice XML efforts ([http://www.ijis.org/news/Industry\\_Policy\\_Statement\\_08252003.pdf](http://www.ijis.org/news/Industry_Policy_Statement_08252003.pdf))

Syracuse Police Department Integrates Global Justice XML Data Dictionary (GJXDD) Elements into a Countywide Records Management System ([http://it.ojp.gov/documents/20031007\\_NY\\_GJXDD\\_CRP.pdf](http://it.ojp.gov/documents/20031007_NY_GJXDD_CRP.pdf))

Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia plan first multistate transportation and public safety integrated wireless network in the United States. (<http://www.capwin.org/defined.html>)

Hawaii State Courts to Get an Integrated Statewide Justice Information Management System (<http://www.govtech.net/news/news.php?id=2003.10.13-72499>)

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“homeland security money.” My inquiries into this area, however, have thus far revealed a federal agency that is still in the process of getting organized (See Washington Post, *Government’s Hobbled Giant*, Sept. 7, 2003). Additionally, none of the existing JIN planning documents focus on security or public safety. JIN planning to date has been about increasing efficiency and reducing costs, which are only tangentially related to homeland security.

Finally, there seems to have been a distinction made at a higher level in the state between “justice information” and “intelligence.” This has resulted in the organization of committees and the beginning of information-sharing projects without the involvement of the JIN.

Nevertheless, I buoyed by similar homeland security challenges and I’m confident that consolidation is inevitable – particularly if JIN can establish itself as a leader in the state and region in connecting the diverse members of the justice community and establishing protocols for the necessary exchanges of information.

## Conclusion

Six months into this challenge, I am beginning to understand the process and the challenges. This is a much different point than where I saw myself when I started. Besides the lack of resources, the biggest challenges have been a governance structure with various levels of commitment and competing interests; management of incomplete, disorganized and exclusive resources; a tendency toward meetings, conferences and planning rather than action; a lack of cooperative projects; and no unifying vision of where we want to be or how we get there.

On the positive side, I have found a community of smart, resourceful people; a willingness among those at the highest level to commit themselves to the project and to provide candid and thoughtful guidance; a wealth of free outside reference and consulting resources available and willing to do meaningful work in response to most any question; and a challenge to help design and build something of present and lasting value for a wonderful community. I am confident that my report six months from now will indicate a hint of progress, and perhaps even a return of the brash confidence with which I arrived in Washington. ♦



**Brian LeDuc**

Program Director  
360/902.9889  
brianl@dis.wa.gov